

USAID and State in Washington, and as conceived would contribute significantly to the President's Muslim World Initiative in Science, Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (MWI). ACTION REQUEST: RDMA requests the Department to ask EAP and relevant SCA posts (info addressees above) to provide key points of contact of leading technical and research institutions, universities, think tanks, and other partners who are likely to play an important role in partnership with the ARC. END SUMMARY.

History - Asia Climate Change Center of Excellence

¶2. The RDMA began taking concerted steps in 2007 to significantly elevate its focus on global climate change (GCC) and prepared a five-year programming Road Map for the Asia-Pacific region with the support of the GCC team in USAID's Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade (EGAT). The idea for a GCC center of excellence for the Asia region originated in this Road Map and began to coalesce in early 2008 in connection with USAID's "Rebuilding USAID" initiative, one of the key pillars of which was to build capacity in regional centers to respond to complex challenges and provide specialized technical support to bilateral field Missions while maximizing the efficient use of Agency resources. Among the earliest such initiatives proposed was to "expand the Bangkok platform to develop expertise in Global Climate Change and Energy." In response, RDMA was tasked with presenting brief summaries on possible "centers of excellence" for the Asia region for consideration by USAID's Business Transformation Executive Committee (BTEC).

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¶3. In March 2009, at the express request of BTEC and of USAID's Asia Bureau, RDMA prepared and submitted a concept note to the Asia Bureau and BTEC describing a new Asia Regional Center of Excellence on Climate Change and Development (ARC) that would serve the Asia-Pacific region and be based in Bangkok. To date, the concept also has been shared with the USAID GCC team and Asia Bureau, State/OES, and approximately 95 USAID staff participating in the worldwide GCC and Development training in Washington last month. Positive feedback resulted from informal discussions with a number of posts in the Asia-Pacific region during the Asia Mission Directors meeting at PACOM in April 2009.

¶4. During the past several weeks, the ARC concept has been discussed with EAP A/S Campbell, when he accompanied the Secretary on her visit to Bangkok, as well as in Washington with the Deputy Envoy on Climate Change, Jonathan Pershing. The ARC concept also has been incorporated into discussions among the agencies participating in the sub-IPC on Science and Technology, aimed at formulating actionable deliverables in connection with the President's Muslim World Initiative in Science, Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (MWI).

Climate Change Challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region

¶5. The Asia region is central to USG efforts to address climate change due to the region's substantial greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and its significant vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change. (Note, consistent with RDMA's geographic coverage, the term "Asia" encompasses comprehensively the broader Asia-Pacific region.) China, Indonesia, and India rank among the top six GHG emitters worldwide, and since 2008 China has been the world's largest emitter overall. By 2030, carbon dioxide emissions from energy consumed in Asia's largest developing countries are expected to jump from 23 to 50 percent of the world total, primarily due to surging coal and petroleum use. Deforestation, poor forestry practices, and land degradation further contribute significantly to the region's GHG emissions.

¶6. As many as 2.5 billion people in the region are at risk from the effects of climate change, largely due to heavy dependence on threatened natural resources, large populations in coastal and other

low-lying areas, and direct climate impacts ranging from water scarcity (e.g., seven major river systems dependent on Tibetan

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glaciers), to sea-level rise, to increased frequency of severe weather in an already disaster-prone region. Given these mounting challenges, RDMA has been actively advancing the USG climate change and development agenda in the Asia-Pacific region, and has launched a series of new climate change-focused programs regionally and in China, as well as conducted a series of high-profile studies on key climate change challenges and opportunities in the region. Burgeoning interest in a regional climate change center of excellence has been a direct outgrowth of these initiatives.

ARC Objectives and Functions

17. As outlined in the ARC concept note, which RDMA has shared with OES/EGC and S/SECC, the objective of the ARC is "to serve as a leading technical institution with world-class expertise, research, technical assistance, training, and knowledge sharing capabilities to enhance, catalyze, and expand innovation and action in order to advance USG climate change and development goals related to adaptation, forest and land use management, and clean energy in Asia." In achieving these objectives, the ARC will facilitate information-sharing on current science and policy to inform and guide USAID and its partners (including other USG agencies) in more effectively addressing climate change and development challenges in Asia. Core functions of the ARC will be to expand technical capacity and leadership in Asia's GCC and development, assisting USAID bilateral Missions and USG partners in developing and implementing climate change and development actions more effectively, and helping leverage private sector resources and partnerships to further augment impact. Where appropriate, the ARC will also manage and implement targeted regional programs (such as regional data sharing systems).

18. The ARC will link to national-level policy developments on climate change in a range of countries, and thus complement ongoing bilateral activities of USAID missions, other USG agencies, and donors. The ARC will also serve as a USG platform for mobilizing the whole range of USG expertise including the Department of Agriculture/Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Department of Energy (DOE). Further synergies will result from coordination with other regional USG initiatives and offices, such as with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) DRAGON scientific network. DRAGON was highlighted in the Secretary's ground-breaking meeting

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with the Foreign Ministers from Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam last month in Phuket, which inaugurated the Mississippi-Mekong Sister River Partnership. The ARC will also work closely with the OES regional ESTH hubs in Bangkok, Kathmandu and Suva.

19. ARC partners will conduct cutting-edge basic and applied research, analysis, testing, piloting, evaluation, and scale up, and work to disseminate innovative GCC policies, programs, tools, technologies, and practices in clean energy, forestry and land use, adaptation and resilience. Targeted cutting-edge research supported through the ARC's strategic partnerships will aim to better understand regional, sub-regional, and local-level climate change challenges across a range of issues (e.g., glacial melt, coastal inundation, peatland emissions, and ocean acidification), in order to identify the best near and long-term response measures. Training, publications, and programs will aim to mobilize, catalyze, and scale up investments in innovative climate change and development solutions across the region. To ensure the greatest benefits from these efforts, it is envisioned that the ARC will retain world-class U.S. and international expertise, support professional exchanges, engage with a broad community of leading researchers and practitioners, and directly link applied research

and "learning" activities with education initiatives in the region.

"Center" as Regional Network of Strategic Partners

¶10. The ARC is envisioned to serve as a principal hub for innovation and knowledge-sharing through cooperative partnerships with state-of-the-art U.S., international, and regional science and technology research institutions, universities, and think tanks, as well as with the private sector, and regional and bilateral partners. This "hub and spokes" concept is expected to provide the strongest possible framework for promoting regional cooperation and action on climate change and development challenges in the region, and aligns with existing partnership arrangements in the climate change and development sphere. By providing these services through a broad network of institutions in the region, the Center will enhance, catalyze and expand innovation and action in order to achieve USG and partner country climate change and development goals related to clean energy, forest and land use management, and adaptation in the region.

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¶11. As the host for the ARC's central facility, Bangkok provides a major logistics, transportation, and communications hub for the region and sub-region. Some 24 regional United Nations agencies and platforms operate from Bangkok -- most of which will play an important cooperative role on climate change -- as well as a number of regional universities (such as the Asian Institute of Technology), research and training centers, NGO-supported initiatives, and bilateral donors implementing regional programs. Bangkok is also the base for over ten USG agencies that support regional programs with a connection to climate change, and partnerships across more than 20 countries in East Asia (including China and the Tibetan Plateau), South Asia (including India and Bangladesh), Southeast Asia (including Indonesia), and the Pacific. While the ASEAN and APEC Secretariats may not be located in Bangkok, it remains a significant base from which the USG engages both. Most of the international NGOs with climate change programs make their regional headquarters here. Bangkok also provides a relatively high degree of security compared with other possible locations in the region. For all these reasons, Bangkok is already the site of more climate change conferences and events than any other Asian city. The USG also has a huge presence in Thailand, with almost 40 offices and agencies, owing to the Royal Thai Government's flexibility accommodation on USG staffing levels. Any staffing increases necessitated by the ARC could be easily achieved here, which may not be the case in some other Asian countries. It is also worth noting that our close historical relationship with Thailand makes it extremely unlikely that we would ever have to precipitously reduce staffing levels for political or other reasons.

¶12. As conceptualized, the ARC will serve the Asia region in full coordination with USAID, State, and other USG counterparts based in the region. RDMA recently updated its ARC Concept Note to reflect important new developments in connection with the President's Muslim World Initiative, and USAID now intends to address MWI priorities, such as partnering with key S&T institutions in Indonesia, Bangladesh, or in Muslim Majority Countries (MMCs) based on direction from Washington and planned technical consultations on feasibility and appropriateness. Jakarta and Dhaka are the primary MMC locations being considered for sub-regional ARC representation.

Partnership with U.S. Department of Energy

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¶13. In support of further developing potential partnerships, USAID/RDMA has initiated discussions in Beijing this week with USDOE on opportunities for coordinating the development and operations of

the ARC with the recently announced Joint Research Center on Clean Energy with China, and related scaled-up DOE deployment activities. Initial discussions were very positive and follow up meetings are planned.

¶14. The opportunities for collaboration between the two centers in mobilizing national and regional innovation and best practices in clean energy are expected to be force multipliers for the products of both, given the complementarity of DOE's science research capacity and USAID's experience in capacity building, technical outreach, and private sector partnering. USAID/RDMA's ongoing climate change programs meet the intent of the U.S.-China MOU signed at the July Strategic and Economic Dialogue. These include U.S.-China partnerships addressing energy efficient lighting, cleaner coal, green buildings, legal regulatory framework for environmental enforcement, and community based energy efficiency initiatives in Guangdong Province co-financed by General Electric, Wal-Mart, Citi Foundation, Honeywell and other U.S. private sector partners. An additional partnership being awarded in September will expand into other climate change areas such as renewable energy and greenhouse gas accounting. Guangdong Province is strategic in that it was the first province to open China's external trade and is now known as the "factory of the world." The GOC has recently tasked province officials with meeting new carbon reducing performance targets and these officials have been keen to form a strong partnership with USAID.

¶15. RDMA will continue to explore opportunities for establishing linkages with a wide range of key institutions and research centers across the region, such as: The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in India; the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) in Japan; Clean Air Initiative-Asia (CAI-Asia) in Manila; the Manila Observatory; Stockholm Environment Institute-Asia (SEI-Asia) in Bangkok; the Asia-Pacific network on Climate Change (AP-Net) in Tokyo; the Global Change System for Analysis, Research and Training (START) Regional Center in Bangkok; the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in Bogor; the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Asia Regional Office in Bangkok; the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) Secretariat in Jakarta; the Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) Greater Mekong Subregion Environment Operations Center in Bangkok; the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Bangkok; the ASEAN University Network, in Bangkok; the

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Mekong River Commission (MRC) in Vientiane; the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu; the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Greater Mekong Program in Bangkok; the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) in Bangkok; and potentially many others.

ARC Feasibility Assessment

¶16. RDMA expects to expend approximately \$800,000 in FY 2009 program funds to support the development of the ARC. It is in the final stages of preparing to conduct a six month feasibility assessment starting in October 2009 to explore options for establishing the ARC during 2010. A request for quotations has been issued, and RDMA expects to award a contract next month. The assessment team is expected to conduct desktop research and analysis; hold consultations, group meetings, and workshops with key organizations and stakeholders in Washington and the Asia-Pacific region; prepare an Assessment Report summarizing the findings related to the areas described above; and prepare recommended revisions to the ARC Concept Note. The final Assessment Report will make recommendations regarding the ARC's core functions (including research, knowledge-sharing, innovation, and related functions); organization and management; and launch and operationalization. RDMA and its assessment team intend to work closely with USAID/W, State, and other USG agencies throughout the assessment.

Action Request

¶17. In preparation for the forthcoming feasibility assessment, Post requests that the Department ask posts in EAP and the relevant SCA posts (info addressees in this cable) to provide key points of contact of leading technical and research institutions, universities, think tanks, bilateral donors, and other partners who are likely to play an important role in partnership with the ARC. Please provide point of contact information including name, title, organization, address/location, telephone, email, and web address, if applicable, as well as a sentence summarizing the role of the institution in addressing climate change and development domestically or regionally. Post would appreciate submission of information by info addressees by September 18 to Corina Warfield at RDMA, cwarfield@usaid.gov, with a copy to ESTH Hub officer Hal

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Howard, howardhh@state.gov. Post apologizes for the time requirement that sending this information will entail, but will provide the compiled organization data to USAID and the Department for overall USG coordination of foreign assistance and collaboration.

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